

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CANBER 06467 160841Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-20 SMS-01 TRSE-00 /100 W
-----104961 160924Z /13

R 160712Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4058
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
CINCPAC

UNCLAS CANBERRA 6467

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: XO, UR, AS, MILI, VN
SUBJ: PRIME MINISTER FRASER ON THE RUSSIANS AT CAM RANH BAY

1. BELIEVE IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT ON THE OPENING DAY OF
PARLIAMENT, PRIME MINISTER FRASER WAS ASKED (DURING QUESTION
TIME) ABOUT REPORTS THAT THE SOVIET NAVY MIGHT GAIN ACCESS
TO NAVAL FACILITIES AT CAM RANH BAY. FRASER'S REPLY WAS A
RATHER FULL AND CONSIDERED STATEMENT, COMPLETE TEXT OF WHICH
IS BEING POUCHED TO THE DEPARTMENT. THE ESSENCE OF FRASER'S
STATEMENT IS REPEATED BELOW.

2. QTE. CONCERN HAS BEEN EXPRESSED FROM TIME TO TIME THAT
RUSSIA MIGHT GAIN ACCESS TO CAM RANH BAY. SUCH A FACILITY
WOULD ENORMOUSLY INCREASE THE SOVIET UNION'S CAPACITY TO REACH
OUT WITH GREATER STRENGTH. THIS GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN CONCERNED
FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF BALANCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. BUT
ACTIVITIES OF RECENT TIMES BY THE SOVIET UNION HAVE NOT GIVEN
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US GREAT CAUSE TO BE CONFIDENT THAT THE SOVIET UNION SHARES
THAT OBJECTIVE.

QTE. IN ADDITION, THE ASEAN NATIONS HAVE POLICIES DESIGNED TO
MAKE SURE THAT THE MILITARY ACTIVITIES OF THE MAJOR POWERS
DO NOT IMPACT ON THE REGION. WE HAVE ALWAYS SUPPORTED THE
ASEAN NATIONS VERY STRONGLY IN THAT OBJECTIVE. I AM QUITE

CERTAIN THAT THE ASEAN COUNTRIES WOULD NOT WANT TO SEE
ADDITIONAL INCURSIONS OF ANY KIND THAT WOULD UPSET THE
PRESENT SITUATION. A MAJOR DEVELOPMENT AT CAM RANH BAY BY THE
SOVIET UNION WOULD BE SUCH A DEVELOPMENT.

QTE. IF THIS GOVERNMENT HAS TO MAKE A CHOICE, IN BOLD AND
PLAIN TERMS, BETWEEN NAVAL FACILITIES UNDER THE CONTROL OF
THE US AND THOSE UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE SOVIET UNION, I
GUARANTEE THAT WE WOULD PREFER THOSE FACILITIES UNDER THE
CONTROL OF THE UNITED STATES. WE DO NOT WISH TO SEE AN
EXTENSION OF MAJOR FACILITIES UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE SOVIET
UNION THAT WOULD UPSET THE STRATEGIC BALANCE AND WHICH WOULD,
AT THE SAME TIME, BE VIEWED WITH GREAT DISFAVOR BY ASEAN
COUNTRIES AND WHICH WOULD LEAD TO THE POSSIBILITY OF
POLITICAL INSTABILITY OF A VERY SERIOUS KIND. END QTE.
ALSTON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRIME MINISTER, NAVAL FORCES, MILITARY BASES, SPEECHES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978CANBER06467
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780334-1356
Format: TEL
From: CANBERRA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780861/aaaabyfs.tel
Line Count: 78
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 94fef662-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1730074
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRIME MINISTER FRASER ON THE RUSSIANS AT CAM RANH BAY
TAGS: MPOL, XO, UR, AS, VN, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/94fef662-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014